"The world's broken. You can't trust anyone." —Raya
"Maybe it's broken because you don't trust anyone." —Sisu

From Walt Disney Animation Studios comes the epic adventure "Raya and the Last Dragon," set in the fantasy world of Kumandra, where long ago humans and dragons lived together in harmony. But when an evil force threatened the land, the dragons sacrificed themselves to save humanity.

Now, 500 years later, that same evil has returned and it's up to a lone warrior, Raya, to track down the legendary last dragon to restore the fractured land and unite its divided people.

"Everything's been taken away from Raya," explains producer Osnat Shurer. "She's totally on her own. She's got nothing left save for her father's sword, her friend, Tuk Tuk, and a shard of something that might be magical. And she sets out into Kumandra seeking the last dragon, Sisu, with the hope of restoring peace to her land."

But along her journey, Raya will learn that it'll take more than a dragon to save the world. "This is Raya's journey of learning to trust," says director Don Hall, "after her trust was so deeply broken when she was a child."

"You can't really get to unity without trust, and for Raya it will take trusting a group of strangers if she is ever going to have a united Kumandra," adds Carlos López Estrada, who shares directing duties with Don Hall.

Raya's quest to find the last dragon, destroy the Druun and save her world is also a journey of self-discovery—a quest filled with danger, adventure, humor and new friendships, yet tinged with regret, loss and anger born of the need to avenge a wrong. What Raya learns, and comes to believe, is bigger than all of us: we can trust, we can work together, we can unite. And, most importantly, we must.

"Raya and the Last Dragon" features the voices of Kelly Marie Tran ("*Star Wars*: The Rise of Skywalker," "Sorry for Your Loss") as Raya; Awkwafina ("Crazy Rich Asians," "The Farewell") as the legendary last dragon, Sisu; Izaac Wang ("Good Boys," "Think Like a Dog") as Boun; Gemma Chan (Marvel Studios' "Captain Marvel," "Let Them All Talk") as Namaari; Daniel Dae Kim ("The Good Doctor," "Hawaii Five-0") as Benja; Benedict Wong (Marvel Studios' "Avengers: Endgame" and "Doctor Strange") as Tong; Jona Xiao ("Hightown," "Gifted") as Young Namaari; Sandra Oh ("Killing Eve," "Grey's Anatomy") as Virana; Thalia Tran ("Council of Dads," "Little") as Little Noi; Lucille Soong ("Fresh Off the Boat," "Desperate Housewives") as Dang Hu; and Alan Tudyk (voices in "Frozen 2" and "Ralph Breaks the Internet") as Tuk Tuk.

"Raya and the Last Dragon" is helmed by Don Hall, director of Disney's Academy Award®–winning "Big Hero 6," and Carlos López Estrada, whose feature film directorial debut was the critically acclaimed "Blindspotting." Veteran artist Paul Briggs, known for his work as head of story on "Frozen" and "Big Hero 6," and fellow longtime animator/story artist John Ripa ("Moana," "Zootopia") are co-directors. Osnat Shurer, who was nominated for an Oscar® for "Moana," and Oscar winner Peter Del Vecho of "Frozen" fame are the producers. Award-winning playwright and writer Qui Nguyen ("Vietgone," "She Kills Monsters") and Adele Lim ("Crazy Rich Asians," "Private Practice") wrote the screenplay.

Walt Disney Animation Studios' "Raya and the Last Dragon" will be released simultaneously in theaters and on Disney+ with Premier Access on March 5, 2021.

THE STORY: DRAGON MYTHOLOGY DRIVES A THEMATIC JOURNEY

Integral to the story of "Raya and the Last Dragon" is the character Sisu, the legendary water dragon Raya seeks in hope of saving Kumandra. As Raya sets off on her quest to find Sisu, she is empowered by her absolute belief in the dragon's power to help restore Kumandra and its people to life and happiness.

Qui Nguyen, who wrote the screenplay with Adele Lim, offers insight into Sisu and what she represents: "Throughout different cultures in Asia, including Southeast Asia, there is a very strong love and affection for dragons, but these dragons are very different from what you see in 'Game of Thrones,' for example. They mean luck. They signify life-affirming powers and fortitude, and those aspects were important to expand on since Raya is a Southeast Asian–inspired hero."

Producer Osnat Shurer adds, "The dragon is interpreted all over the world very differently. The European dragon is a fire-breathing dragon; the Asian dragon, however, is more connected to water and to life, and to harmony. As we dug deeper into Southeast Asian water elementals and water deities, we learned of the Naga of Southeast Asia, which appears more serpentine than other dragons seen in Asian cultures. The Naga was one of the strongest inspirations for the design of Sisu in her dragon form."

Director Don Hall points out, “Sisu is a water being, and water became a recurring motif and a huge visual thematic in the film.”

Nguyen offers another insight into Sisu’s character as it plays out in “Raya and the Last Dragon”: “Sisu is highly revered and super powerful, but at the same time, we wanted to subvert our expectations of what a dragon could be like. So, she’s funny. She’s goofy. She trips on herself. She’s new to the world. She’s new to what life is like now. There’s something charming and fun about her, and I think that she’s just a really fun comedic character to follow.”

Both screenwriters, Qui Nguyen and Adele Lim, drew upon inspirations from their Southeast Asian heritages to develop the characters of Raya and Sisu. Lim says, “In Southeast Asia, there’s a great tradition of female leaders, military leaders and warriors. And leaders of their realms. And also, the stories of Nagas and dragons, particularly with water. In Malaysia, we have the warrior Tun Fatimah, and we have stories of Naga Tasik Chini, which is the dragon of Chini Lake. The Nagas and strong females are present within a lot of the cultures in Southeast Asia, so we knew those were threads that would really resonate within the film.”

Comments Nguyen, “Without a doubt, I think Adele and I drew inspirations for families from our parents. Specifically for me, from my mom. I know what she had to go through when she came to this country. And just to have that kind of fighting spirit. And also, just the kind of energy that our people have that you don’t always get to display on screen. It was important for us to show the real spirit of Southeast Asia out there.”

As the story of Raya’s journey in “Raya and the Last Dragon” evolved over the years of developing the film, a theme of unity and togetherness began to emerge, being further honed and defined when directors Don Hall and Carlos López Estrada came on board the project.

“There had been some great exploration by the team into the concept of unity and togetherness,” says Hall, “but Carlos and I felt that homing in on the *trust* required to achieve unity would lay a firm groundwork from which to make every decision in our lead character’s journey.”

Describing the tone of the film and how it affects the Raya character, screenwriter Adele Lim says, “The tone we really wanted to lead with was one of love for our world, our family and joy. With a project like this that is so fantastical, we wanted to find emotional anchors for our character and her journey, grounded in something true and relatable. So, when you look at Raya and her journey—she loses her relationship with her father, she loses this world she grew up in—and there’s this need to fight for the chance to restore her world, and perhaps see her father again, one day. And so we wanted to explore all those emotions but at the same time have the film be joyful, fun and an adventure.”

Co-director John Ripa says writers Nguyen and Lim were “both incredible to work with on this film. They both bring amazing character and humor to their writing. Adele really found Raya’s character—her strengths, her vulnerabilities, as well as how she relates—or doesn’t—to those

around her. And Qui is really incredible with structure. He also found a lot of entertainment and humor, and specificity for the characters' voices. And so, with the two working together, you get this powerhouse combination of heart, humor, story structure and character specificity."

Head of story Fawn Veerasunthorn and her team of story artists were key to visualizing the script and delivering the directors' vision. "The storyboarding phase of production is like the testing ground of ideas—to see if things work. We rework things a lot on every version of the film to make sure that we deliver the best humor, the best and clearest story for the audience," she explains.

Veerasunthorn, who was born and raised in Thailand, felt it was essential for her and her team to be steeped in the cultural inspirations, so she put on a presentation of key learnings she and the other filmmakers gleaned from their research trip to Southeast Asia. "I wanted to provide the same experience for my team," says Veerasunthorn. "In the beginning it was kind of hard to understand culturally, because people are not as familiar with Southeast Asia as perhaps other parts of Asia. So, a lot of artists didn't know what to draw for the outfits or other cultural things. So, it was a way to get everyone on the same page."

For Shurer, developing the first Southeast Asian warrior princess was a labor of love born out of her past Disney experiences and collaborations. "I'd have to say that Disney has a long legacy of pushing the envelope in terms of the power and the strength of our female protagonists," says Shurer. "We did that on 'Moana,' for example, and with 'Raya and the Last Dragon' we just took it to a whole new level, and just pushed it exactly where we wanted it to be, with all the blessings of our chief creative officer and the rest of our story trust. Just go and play and make her as amazing as she can be. Not just her, but Namaari, Sisu and all the other characters. Just push it. And so, we did. We're really proud of the result."

Director Carlos López Estrada concurs, "If you think about Raya in context with the rest of the movies from Walt Disney Animation Studios, it makes sense and belongs to the family. But it also just stands out in a way that is just super exciting. I feel like she is going to be unlike any Disney heroine you've ever seen."

THE VOICE CAST: GIVING CHARACTERS HEART

Voice casting for "Raya and the Last Dragon" was ongoing since the first seeds of Raya's story were sown. Casting director Jamie Sparer Roberts sought out voice actors who could not only bring the characters to life but also infuse them with some of their own spirit, vitality, energy and personality.

Working closely with the filmmakers, Roberts helped to assemble a voice cast, led by the inimitable Kelly Marie Tran, which was in a class of its own—and committed to working under the most unusual circumstances. Comments Roberts, "All of the actors that we worked with were able to come together in this strange time and embrace the process of having to work from home

and not be together for most of it. We are all deeply grateful these talented actors were willing to sign up and do it under these circumstances and bring all they did to their performances."

Director Don Hall adds, "They're all, across the board, amazing. One of the things I love, in terms of the type of actor we love to work with in animation, is a person who is just willing to play and not be too self-conscious about it. I know how hard it is to go in that room with just a microphone and your imagination."

A closer look at the characters and talented voice cast bringing them to life:

RAYA *(voice by Kelly Marie Tran)*

Raya is a proud Guardian of the Dragon Gem, a title she holds alongside her beloved father, Benja, the Chief of the Heart lands. Her world is turned upside down when the Gem is broken and her father is turned to stone. Now on a mission to save the world, she's grown up to be a resilient warrior whose wit is as sharp as her blade.

"Raya is such an incredible character," says Tran. "In the beginning of the movie, when we first meet Raya as a young girl, she experiences something traumatic that shapes the way that she sees the world. When we meet Raya later when she's older, she is seeing the world through this lens of not being able to trust anyone. She's had to find a way to survive in a world that has become pretty dark, and it's cool to see her come from that and try to learn how to trust again."

The directors were impressed with how Tran could round out the strong, independent character and flesh out her emotion and vulnerability. "Kelly brings so much emotion," says Carlos López Estrada. "She brings an edge that we didn't know that we could find. And, honestly, when she stepped into the booth and started recording, it was an unforgettable moment because we felt like she fully embodied Raya, beyond our wildest dreams."

Describing how she relates to Raya, Tran says, "I really connect with Raya because I think anyone who is a living human being has gone through things in his or her life that are traumatic, or has gone through difficult times and has to learn how to reconcile those events and live in the world again. That is a universal experience for human beings. We must try to figure out how to find the good in the world, even when it seems like sometimes there's so much darkness."

According to director Don Hall, a lot of time spent in story development is focused on figuring out who the characters are, and casting a voice actor like Kelly Marie Tran for a character often helps to define the character. "The way Kelly can move between comedy and drama was key to getting to know Raya," says Hall. "Kelly brings a buoyancy and likability to the character."

Remarking on Tran, Osnat Shurer shares, "Kelly is a brilliant actress. And just one of the warmest and kindest people I've ever worked with. There was a warmth that she brought into the character. We wrote the character as strong. It was very important to us that Raya is strong. She's had to survive by herself for six years. Her solo journey has taken her to every end of every river

with evil forces around that could kill her at any turn. And yet, it was also very important to us that we sense her warmth, and that it grew along the journey of the film."

She adds, "Kelly was able to bring to it this balance of strength. She's a strong woman with a little bit of cheekiness, wit, as well as a warmth that makes the character be the character you want to spend this movie with. You want her to win, and you want her to open up and begin to trust again. And that is very much Kelly."

The importance of being Disney's first Southeast Asian princess is not lost on Tran, who is Vietnamese American. "It is *so* exciting to be the first Southeast Asian Disney Princess," says Tran. "It is a big deal. It feels like a really big honor and a big responsibility at the same time, and I just want to do it justice. I'm really grateful, and even now I am still sort of in a place of disbelief with the whole thing."

SISU *(voice by Awkwafina)*

Sisu, short for Sisudatu, is the last dragon of Kumandra. Legends say she's a divine water being of unspeakable beauty and unstoppable magic, but what Raya finds instead is a funny, self-deprecating dragon who sees herself as the perennial C-student. Now she must learn to become the dragon of legend if she is to save the world with Raya.

"I definitely connect with Sisu," says Awkwafina. "She has optimism, she has hope and she even has belief in herself—but really to her surprise. I love her because she isn't perfect, and I think that's a strong message to send to everyone: we don't have to be perfect."

Director Carlos López Estrada comments, "Awkwafina brought a unique sense of humor and some deep emotion to the character. Visually, the entire animation team brought the dragon to life so that every time we see a new moment with her, she just grows and gets funnier and sillier and also really warm and caring. Sisu is such an inspirational character, and I hope that a lot of people connect with her."

"Awkwafina *is* Sisu dragon," says producer Osnat Shurer. "What a great casting decision that turned out to be. She's amazing, she's hilarious, she's fun, she improvises and she'll hit the emotion with no fear at all. She's just been a joy to work with."

Shurer says Sisu was a complex character to shape within the story-making process. "We were looking to create a character that had ancient knowledge, and yet had this incredible humor. And Awkwafina brings to the table the naiveté, the openness and the innocence of the Sisu character."

"For us, it was important to show the different sides of trust in terms of Sisu trusting in people completely," says Don Hall. "And utterly. And how in a world that is as broken as Kumandra, when we pick up the story, that trust can be taken advantage of. But she never loses her belief in the power of trust, and in her belief in human beings. And I think it was important for us to push on it but have Sisu be unwavering in her ability and belief in trust."

Carlos López Estrada adds, “A nice texture also to Sisu’s character is that, in the movie, she gains the power of shapeshifting, and she’s able to transform into a human. And that allows her to also understand what it feels like to experience the world through our eyes. The distrust and the challenges that we face with each other. And that brings her just a little bit closer to us and allows her to speak not only from hundreds of years of wisdom but also from the perspective of being new to the human world.”

Fawn Veerasunthorn, head of story, offers insight on the different viewpoints of Sisu and Raya: “Sisu is a character that I always equate to coming from the old world where you leave your front door unlocked when you are borrowing sugar from your neighbor. And Raya is like, ‘Girl, the world is not what it used to be. You can’t just walk down a city street and let just anyone help you. They’re going to scam you.’ Raya’s thinking has merit. Everyone can understand her in a way, and you understand that Sisu was from a time where we all had more faith in each other. I think the pairing of the two is really interesting.”

For Awkwafina, working on “Raya and the Last Dragon” was an unforgettable experience. “This is my first Disney animated movie, and when it comes to the process, especially working with the directors, it’s very involved. It’s not just coming in and doing voice acting. It’s a very immersive experience. One thing that I learned just working with people at Disney Animation, in general, is that there’s the ability to harness that childlike quality and kind of feel like a kid again. That was very present in the process.”

NAMAARI *(voice by Gemma Chan)*

Brilliant, calculating and a formidable warrior, Namaari is Raya’s unrelenting nemesis. She is the daughter of the Chief of the Fang lands and is determined to do whatever it takes to protect her people. However, down deep, she holds a secret love for dragons.

“Namaari is a really interesting character,” says Gemma Chan. “She’s an antagonist in the film and Raya’s rival. They met when they were younger, and Raya feels betrayed by Namaari. But Namaari has been raised in a very different way than Raya. She’s been raised by her mother to look out for her own people, which are the people of Fang. But she and Raya actually have a lot in common. What unites them is their love of dragons. They’ve been obsessed with dragons and dragon magic since they were kids. It’s what they first bonded over, and that has carried through into their lives.”

“When we were crafting this character,” says screenwriter Qui Nguyen, “it was a character that we knew was going to be a bad guy that had to be Raya’s equal in every way. But the best bad guy is the one that you understand, and that you have sympathy for. In a strange way, you want to see them turn. And, with Gemma, she was able to work with that kind of nuance and subtlety to also show the pain of what Namaari was going through. So, even though Namaari was our bad guy, we always wished they could get along. That feeling was always there, and it was a hard tightrope to be on. But Gemma did it wonderfully.”

Even though Namaari is the so-called “bad guy,” Chan had no problem warming to the character. “Namaari’s really fun,” says Chan. “She’s pretty badass. She’s a fighter. She’s a warrior. I really like her spirit, and she’s got a bit of an attitude. But although she’s got this tough exterior, she’s got this real longing in her heart. So, all that was fun to play.”

BENJA *(voice by Daniel Dae Kim)*

Known as “the baddest blade in the five lands,” Benja is Raya’s beloved father and legendary Guardian of the Dragon Gem. As chief of Heart, he’s an idealistic and bold visionary who believes that Kumandra is broken because the people of the different lands don’t trust each other. Benja seeks to reunite the fractured kingdom of Kumandra and restore harmony.

On casting Kim in the role of Benja, screenwriter Adele Lim says, “We really wanted somebody you could feel that warmth and compassion with and yet that sense of authority. And Daniel Dae Kim, within our community of Asian Americans in the United States, has done so much in terms of really promoting visibility for people who are underrepresented. And just him as a human being with so much warmth but, again, you feel that strife. He was just such a great piece of casting for us.”

According to Osnat Shurer, “Benja is a character that carries so much of the gravitas and integrity of the film. He’s the one who’s willing to stand up when no one else trusts each other and take the first step. This is a character that could easily come off stuffy. Daniel, instead, brings dignity and warmth to Benja. He’s a loving father. But even more importantly, there’s a playful side to Benja’s nature that makes you really fall in love with him. The relationship between Raya and her father drives the rest of the film, and it works because of Kelly Marie and Daniel Dae Kim.”

VIRANA *(voice by Sandra Oh)*

The cool and calculating chief of the Fang lands and mother to Raya’s archnemesis Namaari, Virana leads her people with fierce pragmatism. A strong, brilliant and unsentimental leader, she rejects the old myths, believing decisive action is the only way to guarantee her people’s survival.

“Sandra Oh was one of the last people we cast for the film because Virana’s role kept changing,” says director López Estrada. “And we really didn’t feel like we found it up until Sandra came into the picture. She’s in only a handful of scenes but, similarly to Raya’s dad, Namaari’s mom has a really strong impact on the story. And Sandra found within those three or four sequences an arc to her character, an elegance to it, a depth to it. We only had a handful of recording sessions with her, but they were so satisfying, and I think she elevated the role of Virana.”

TONG *(voice by Benedict Wong)*

Underneath his huge, gruff and fierce exterior, Tong is really a lonely woodsman with a soft spot for little ones. Equal parts severity and softness, he is truly a gentle giant.

“Benedict Wong is such a force of nature, and he’s elemental in his power,” says Hall. “Every recording session with Benedict was so much fun—watching him become the character and how

he physicalizes his performance and never wears down, never gets tired, and gives you a different version with each take. In fact, we generally had to stop him or he would still be going!"

Qui Nguyen adds, "Benedict often joked that we could make five other movies of just his character doing anything. Like, here is Tong cooking, here is Tong showing how to tie his shoes. He is that entertaining a character."

BOUN *(voice by Izaac Wang)*

A precocious street kid from Tail always up for a business deal, Boun is an adult in a child's body, capable and self-sufficient. He is the self-styled "owner, manager, chef and captain" of his boat, the Shrimporium. Deep down, he's a vulnerable child who lost his parents to the Druun.

Producer Osnat Shurer relates how hard they worked to cast the right young man for the role of Boun: "We had auditioned a lot of young gentleman, and we just weren't finding it because it's a difficult character. He's a grown-up in a kid's body, and yet there are moments of real vulnerability. And he's also fun, and he's also a little sassy. We were towards the end of auditions, and Izaac Wang came in and just nailed it. I remember us looking at each other going this is it, we found him."

She continues, adding, "So, I was the one who went outside to talk to his mom in the kitchen area because I was so excited, and then I realized that I recognized her. She had been part of a Baci ceremony we held at Disney Animation with our crew and Kelly Marie Tran, just weeks before, since she's a Laotian traditional dancer. So, it all came full circle. It was a great moment to find Izaac, because he is Boun, definitely."

LITTLE NOI *(voice by Thalia Tran)*

After her family is lost to the Druun, 2-year-old toddler Little Noi is raised by three Ongis, who are part monkey and part catfish. In the trading port of Talon, she leads the group's hustle, distracting passersby with her cuteness while the resourceful Ongis rob them blind.

"Thalia is amazing," praises Shurer. "She's a wonderful actress, and we gave her this not-very-easy challenge, which is that she needed to express Little Noi's emotion without words. Little Noi has points of humor. She's funny, she's scary, she's good, she's bad. And Thalia somehow found a way to vocalize her where you feel like you know what it is that Little Noi is saying and thinking."

For López Estrada, the character of Little Noi takes on a special meaning. "Little Noi reflects something about the movie that we're all very proud of because, yes, she's an unforgettable character and, yes, she's very funny, but what most drew us to that idea is that the character would represent a real struggle in this world," remarks the director. "On the surface, she's a cute little baby who bosses around these monkey-like creatures, but if you get to understand her story, you'll realize that it actually comes from a really human place. She robs people because she's an orphan. And she robs people because she doesn't have a place to sleep or eat. And she hangs out with these monkeys because she doesn't have anyone else. And I think that's very

reflective of the journey that we go on in this movie—that, with the humor, there is also emotional depth and loss within each of the character's stories."

Continuing, he elaborates, "In the movie, you meet this group of people that, on the surface, appear to be tough or aggressive or violent, but there's a reason why those people are perceived a certain way, or have had to adapt to be a certain way. And not until this group of people of completely different backgrounds and ideologies are forced to be together and coexist that they get to really understand each other and see eye-to-eye. They get to sort of speak the same language, which is really what the movie's about. Little Noi allows us to help inspire conversations about what it takes for people from seemingly different backgrounds to come together and work together. And trust each other."

TUK TUK *(voice by Alan Tudyk)*

Part pill bug, part pug, part high-speed offroad vehicle, and all adorable, Tuk Tuk has been Raya's best friend since she could hold him in the palm of her hand. Now they are both grown, and Tuk Tuk is Raya's faithful, gigantic steed. Together, they tear through the varied terrains of Kumandra at incredible speeds on a journey to find the last dragon and save the world.

Casting director Jamie Sparer Roberts had a special interest in casting Tudyk in the role of Tuk Tuk: "Everybody knows that Alan Tudyk is our good luck charm," she laughs. "I've heard the directors call him our talisman. He's played animals in our movies before—he's Hei Hei in 'Moana.' So, our directors cast him as the adorable Tuk Tuk in this. And he does a great job."

Tuk Tuk's name is inspired by Thailand's famous three-wheeled vehicles. To figure out the mechanics of the character's unique, high-speed movement, animator Brendan Gottlieb and his father built a physical model of the character by hand in his father's home workshop.

Last but not least, our overarching antagonist—the silent, all-encompassing evil that threatens Kumandra: The Druun. The Druun are ethereal, amorphous and destructive spirits born out of human conflict. With a single touch they turn a person to stone and multiply. The Druun are repelled by water but can only be destroyed with the Power of the Dragon.

Rounding out the voice cast are Jona Xiao as Young Namaari; Lucille Soong as Dang Hu; Gordon Ip as Merchant #2, Dichen Lachman as General Atitāya and Spine Warrior; Patti Harrison as Tail Chief; Jon "Dumbfoundead" Park as Chai; Sung Kang as Dang Hai; Sierra Katow as Merchant and Fang Officer; Ross Butler as Spine Chief; François Chau as Wahn; and Paul Yen as Merchant #1.

THE FIVE LANDS OF KUMANDRA: A STUNNING WORLD COMES TO LIFE

Raya's journey in "Raya and the Last Dragon" takes her through the five lands of Kumandra, a fantasy world that forms the shape of a dragon: Heart, Raya's home, a prosperous land filled with peace and magic; Fang, a powerful, thriving land surrounded by water; Spine, an insular and

remote land whose people distrust outsiders; Talon, the crossroads of the five lands and a bustling marketplace; and Tail, a far-flung desert land that is becoming more isolated as water recedes.

Each land in Kumandra has its own physical characteristics and each clan its own ethos, so in essence filmmakers were creating five completely different environments with varying structures and topography, each filled with people who were clothed differently and styled differently. "We have a world made up of five different lands," explains producer Osnat Shurer. "That's like designing five movies. They have five different natural environments, materials they build with, different colors the locals wear, different shape languages that are meaningful to them. For example, in the land of Heart, they are connected to the dragon and the dragon is connected to water, so buildings, rooms, etc., look more like a drop—they're round. Whereas in the land of Fang, they're all about power, so the structures are powerful and over-scale. Every one of these things have been thought through by our incredible visual development and production design team members and then carried through into the film."

The five lands of Kumandra are distinct and filled with their own unique cultures and creatures. To fill this fantasy world, the Crowds Animation department animated more than 72,000 individual elements, including 18,987 human characters and 35,749 non-human characters.

- ***The scene with the largest number of animated characters takes place underwater and features 23,836 animated fish.***
- ***Nearly 70 percent of all sequences in the film include the work of the Crowds Animation department.***

Don Hall adds, "What I love about the story is, it exists on an epic scale in terms of just moving through these five lands, and these different groups, with the fantasy elements, but there's also an intimate feel in terms of character development."

"Raya and the Last Dragon" is the first Walt Disney Animation Studios film to have a Southeast Asia–inspired setting. From the start, it was a labor of love for the filmmakers across the board, several of whom could trace their own roots to the vibrant cultures of the different countries in the region.

Even though Kumandra is a fantasy world, as the artists and filmmakers designed the look of the various lands, they were inspired by fabrics, colors and decor suggestive of those found in the region to build a sense of believable and relatable authenticity to the film, with particular attention to tradition and customs.

As director López Estrada explains, "We're making a movie that is inspired by the cultures of Southeast Asia, and we want to make sure that when people from the region see this, although Kumandra is a made-up place, they can feel the love and respect the team had for the incredible real places that inspired us. We worked hard to make sure that this world we created feels dynamic, that the inspirations affecting the story really come through and that nothing is lost. We want to pay tribute to these cultures that inspired the story and the world of Kumandra."

Two groups of filmmakers made research trips throughout Southeast Asia—including Laos, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore. The research trips became a profound experience for those within the team who had never visited Southeast Asia in such an immersive way.

For co-director Paul Briggs, it was the sense of community and trust that impacted him. “I saw, from the people we met and the families we were with, this level of trust—to a person, everyone was so welcoming. They expected us to be there to learn and be respectful, and we were so deeply honored by everyone’s openness and welcoming spirit.”

Production designer Paul Felix was impressed not only by the architecture, colors and designs of the places he visited, but by how meaning and aesthetics are woven into all aspects of life. “Of the people we met, everyone had such a deep connection to their village and to their culture. They knew all the old legends and what, aesthetically, everything means, and that’s layered into everything from fabrics, to how food is created, to how flowers are arranged. There’s a deeper meaning relating to their culture and their village, which ties into everything that they do.”

Head of story Fawn Veerasunthorn was on a specific mission on the research trip. She explains, “I grew up in Thailand, so I know a lot about Thai culture. But I didn’t know about Cambodian culture or Laotian culture. I discovered there are a lot of similarities between Laos and Thailand. So, during that trip, I wanted to make sure that I learned what the similarities between all the countries are, because the challenge for this movie is that we are inspired by the whole region, which is eleven countries. It was important that, no matter where in Southeast Asia they are from, people can watch this movie and see part of themselves in it.”

For example, Veerasunthorn looked for things everyone did in a similar fashion, such as the greeting. “Most of the countries in this region put their hands together at their chests. I began to think about what Kumandra’s version of a greeting could be. It was important to me that we bring that aspect into it, because people can connect to it. So, we have a symbolized greeting that we do throughout.”

One of the elements that had a deep impact on all the filmmakers was the role food played across all the regions they visited, and though there were both similarities and differences in the tastes and the way the food was prepared along the way, the importance of food in the whole region was inspiring. “Food is something that everyone comes together around. And we realized how visual that is, and how we could lean into it in the movie,” comments Osnat Shurer.

Don Hall adds, “When connecting with those within our team who went on the research trips, it was evident that food had to be a fundamental element in the film. As we looked at our film’s theme of trust, we looked at how food is often a way of building trust and togetherness, and how that could be utilized as a thematic through line.”

Continuing, he says, “Food became sort of a visual metaphor for trust within the film’s story. As the characters are coming together, they’re beginning to share food. And it became a really important piece of visual iconography for the film in just tracking that theme of trust.”

The amount of detail that eventually wound its way into the world-building in “Raya and the Last Dragon” is immense. Southeast Asia, comprising 11 countries and over 650 million people, is diverse, and filmmakers and the experts who came on board wanted to find not only the connections that bind them together but also the inspirations that make them unique.

This attention to detail and representation extended to character development—choice of names, clothing, movement, habits and customs, head and hand positions; food—like soups, fruits and herbs; and environments, landscapes, waterways, motifs and patterns. The goal was sensory immersion: what you hear and what you see and what you feel has a distinctly Southeast Asian inspiration.

In the movie, Raya’s father, Benja, shows her how to make a bowl of soup inspired by Thailand’s Tom Yum soup. He even shows her—and the audience—how to combine real-world ingredients of lemongrass, lime leaves and palm sugar to create Kumandra’s own warming dish. The scene was inspired by head of story Fawn Veerasunthorn’s own experience in a Thai cooking class, when she realized the harmonious combination of sweet, sour and spicy flavors could reflect Benja’s vision for the lands of Kumandra to coexist in the same beautiful way.

For the production designers, there was a lot of discussion early on as they were developing the world and the mythology behind it. “We had a lot of meetings with Story to discuss the particulars of the world, and how the people in the different lands see themselves, because that affects design,” says Felix. “How does their worldview manifest itself in their physical world? What do they decorate their doorways with and, as the film is a fantasy, how would they accommodate different scales of animals? How do people and dragons interact? So, it was a lot of thinking about all the possible ways we could define our world. Once storyboarding started, we collaborated with them to rough-out locations and settings and characters. They were not final designs but just a way of getting everyone on the same page.”

Production designer Helen Chen agrees, saying, “The world-building of Kumandra was the largest task we tackled, and, yes, there were many conversations about what it would be and what it meant and the differences between the lands from the very beginning. But what really clicked with me was when we were on the research trip and we decided that it would be amazing if each land had their own identity and philosophies of life. And so, with that kind of thinking in mind, we were able to execute some of those ideas in the design.”

For example, Heart is surrounded by water, and a lot of their motifs are very water-based, even in the way the palace is constructed from top down, reminiscent of a ripple effect, like rings. The land of Fang is a lot straighter and more forward in design. They are a forceful people, so leaning into straight lines and sharp angles worked for their design elements. “We tried to pinpoint the psychological differences between the lands and how we would be able to express that through our design,” says Chen.

But the one unifying environment in Kumandra for the production designers was water. “When we were on the research trip,” says Chen, “one of the things we noticed was that the Mekong River unites ways of thinking and ways of life. And so, in our movie, we have The Dragon River, and it’s the piece that links everybody together, and even throughout the movie we see them traveling along this river to visit each of the different lands.”

In addition to the water element that ties Kumandra together physically, there is a universal reverence for the dragon. In the various lands, the designers placed dragon-inspired motifs, all interpreted in the unique style of each of the lands.

As each land has its own identity as a people, the production designers assigned very strong color palettes to each of them. For instance, Fang has a golden beige with strong accents of black and red in it, and Tail, the desert land, has mustard colors and more natural dusty colors. “This helped us make the point that, in the beginning of the film when you see them all lined up, they’re all very color-coded and it feels very separate. And then at the end of the movie, when they all convene again, we purposely dispersed the crowds to intermix,” says Chen.

Under the skillful hands of Rob Dressel, director of cinematography-layout, Adolph Lusinsky, director of cinematography-lighting, and visual effects supervisor Kyle Odermatt and their teams, the filmmakers’ visions were fully realized, down to the smallest details, with a richness and depth that draw the viewer into the story in relatable ways.

For Rob Dressel, working with the directors on identifying mood is key for the camera work**.** He explains, “If it’s a somber scene, our cameras will be very still. Whereas if it’s an energetic scene, our cameras are handheld and running all over the place for action. There are also scenes that might have lyrical music to them or more of a character searching for something. For those, the cameras will kind of orbit around the characters and constantly have this movement to them that just gives a more lyrical feel to the scenes.”

It was important that Dressel and his team home in on the themes of the film as well—in this case, trust and distrust. “We’re using Raya’s journey primarily,” says Dressel. “It’s her journey from being trusting to having her trust shattered, to slowly gaining her trust back with the group that she travels with. So, if we’re talking about trust, we want to shoot one way. And then if we’re in a scene or a sequence that’s more about distrust, we’ll shoot it the opposite way to show that contrast. So, for trust, camera-wise, we use longer lenses, which kind of flatten the scene out and don’t show as much of the background. It creates a shallow depth of field or a shallow focus, so only what’s in frame. And the background tends to go very soft and we get what’s called bokeh, which are those little circles that you see if you’re looking at Christmas lights that are way out of focus. Then we use a broader palette of color and a lower contrast. So, that has a cozier, warm feeling. Then on the flip side of that when we’re in distrust, we go very high contrast. We use wide lenses, which tend to show a lot more of the scene and distort things a little bit more. It creates much more focus. So, more of the world is in focus behind our characters. Which gives a very different feel.”

To light “Raya and the Last Dragon,” Adolph Lusinsky and his team studied the story thematics of trust and distrust among the communities of Kumandra. “We really used those thematics to drive the cinematography in the movie, both in layout, in the lens choices, and the way it’s shot and also in the way it’s lit—higher contrast and harsher look for the distrust and then a much softer look for the trust,” says Lusinsky.

Accordingly, each world has its own light. “Two things about the light we chose is that, one, it’s a movie, so we really wanted to feel as you went through each beat in the story that there’s enough time change so that it feels like there’s some distance traveled and doesn’t feel like everything happened in one day,” says Lusinsky. “So, we were really conscious of the time of day, and if we chose a similar time of day, making sure it had a different feel. Next, as some of that is driven by the story thematics, the light in the land of Tail, for example, is the harshest light in the movie. It’s a desert, and the sun is really strong. It’s also a land of contrasts and very dusty, so we’ve added a lot of dust elements and heat distortion as well, like when you see that ripple across the desert floor on a really hot day. You can imagine that really sets itself apart from when it’s sunny later on in another land in the film and they’re having a softer moment.”

There was an effort to make sure the movie felt like it was shot with a camera for a more realistic look. Lusinsky and his team spent some time early on in the movie researching physical light and how much energy the sun throws off in the middle of the day versus the beginning of the day, and how much energy if it’s a cloudy day. “When you look at the movie, hopefully it feels really believable, and you really feel like you’re there,” says Lusinsky. “It was really the goal when we were talking with the directors early on. They wanted the film to feel cinematic and feel like we were there and that it was shot with the camera.”

Lusinsky points to a scene in the movie where the realistic lighting plays out: “In the beginning of the movie when you get introduced to older Raya, we really let things get overexposed and underexposed. There’s a chase through the canyon where you get the sun bouncing around in the canyons, and you really get these really pretty reds from the color of the rock but then you get the blue from the sky. So, you get this really red, blue and purple fill light bouncing down in direct light into the canyons. And then we expose for that, and wherever the canyons get hit by sun it almost goes white and creates a really kind of striking, beautiful image that’s colorful yet high contrast at the same time.”

Rob Dressel adds, “We try and shoot the movie with a mirror towards reality within this fantasy world. We like to keep our feet grounded in that kind of live-action feel, like audiences are used to seeing in films. It goes along with the realism that we like to have in our movies. So, we’re constantly playing with lenses, composition, camera movement and even how we stage characters.”

For visual effects supervisor Kyle Odermatt, the variety inherent in the looks of the different lands was right up his alley. “The fun part is that, from design through execution, it allowed us to really have that variety where we weren’t doing one thing for the whole film,” comments Odermatt.

“We wanted to differentiate the lands from one another as strongly as possible. It was really fun to push each of those lands and have them feel very distinct. It made it entertaining and interesting to work on and at the same time highly challenging.”

The evil Druun proved to be a particularly unique challenge for the effects team. “The challenge with the Druun was that, before we started working on it, we did not have a definitive piece of artwork that described what we were going to try and do,” explains Odermatt. “Our typical process is that we iterate through our visual development department and come up with a design that then is the basis for what we go execute. But one of the aspects we knew about it was that the perception of the Druun was going to be predominantly about motion, because it was something that was always moving and always evolving. So, we just dove in and started making previews of what the Druun could become. Not with all the subtlety and sophistication of what was there eventually, but it gave some ideas of it for the directors’ reactive. So, it was really a 3D development process more than our typical 2D sketch leading to a 3D element.”

Odermatt acknowledges that the environments in “Raya and the Last Dragon” are so rich due in part to the use of set extensions. “A strong evolution of what we’ve done before is the use of set extensions,” he says. “We build three-dimensional environments and then shade and texture them and feed them into our lighting process. This works great and is necessary for areas where characters are going to interact. A lot of times, especially on this film, we are wanting to represent a very large and expansive world. So, we brought that sort of transition line between 3D sets and set extension further and further forward on this film.”

Director Carlos López Estrada agrees. “The look of this movie is so extraordinary and it’s so cinematic. The production teams were able to pull off a wholly unique look to the environments, cinematography and lighting—creating a bold and very different look for a Disney animated movie.”

THE RAYA SOUTHEAST ASIA STORY TRUST: A GATHERING OF EXPERTS

Throughout the making of the movie, filmmakers consulted with a group consisting of anthropologists, architects, dancers, linguists and musicians—a group the filmmakers call the Raya Southeast Asia Story Trust. These expert consultants from the region provided invaluable assistance to the entire production team throughout the making of the film to ensure that, even though this is a fantasy adventure, it is grounded in respect for the diverse cultures of Southeast Asia that inspired the film.

Explaining how the filmmakers worked with the consultants to enrich the story with elements from throughout Southeast Asia, Osnat Shurer says, “It was an organic process. We met some of the Trust members through our early research trips. Still others we sought out for specific elements—whether it was an expert in fabrics, in architecture, in music. We worked with a linguist from the region. Kumandra is such a diverse and big and beautiful and rich world that, in finding our connection to each land, we leaned very heavily on our Southeast Asia Story Trust, on some of our experts, to help find those connections.”

Dr. Soulinhakhath Steve Arounsack, a visual anthropologist who is one of the lead consultants on the film, describes his contributions: “My role was to provide a comprehensive and holistic review of the visuals and cultural themes embedded in our film. That included things such as characters, environment, motifs and all the different philosophies that might go into it. And I examined visuals, small details, such as the types of flowers that are used all the way up to the design of prominent characters like Sisu and Raya and the iconic accessories like Raya’s sword and Raya’s hat.”

The production was blessed with several key creatives who were from or who had familial ties to Southeast Asia, including screenwriter Qui Nguyen, who is Vietnamese American; Fawn Veerasunthorn, head of story, who is from Thailand; and screenwriter Adele Lim, who hails from Malaysia originally. Their insights on everything from customs and traditions, combined with the experts from the Story Trust, created ongoing conversations that enlightened the filmmakers and gave special depth and meaning to the film.

As producer Osnat Shurer says, “The cultural in-conversation was going on during the writing of the script and continued to go on throughout the creation of the film, and continues to this day. Some of it is just because we’re all buddies and we love to talk to each other. But also, we keep our Trust involved as we talk about extensions of the storytelling seen in publishing, in consumer products, in so many elements. So, it’s an ongoing conversation that grows organically through the specific needs of the film.”

A NEW APPROACH TO COSTUME DESIGN

Inspired by garments found throughout the cultures of Southeast Asia, the costumes in “Raya and the Last Dragon” used draping-based designs rather than the pattern-based designs used in previous films.

Functionality was a key aspect of the costume design, so the teams created breathable draping styles inspired by the sabai top and sompot pant found in Laos, Cambodia and Thailand.

Numerous fabrics were used to create the distinct styles found in each of the five lands of Kumandra. In addition to cottons, linens and leathers, 10 different varieties of rich, woven silk and brocade were used—many patterned in a style inspired by the Indonesian technique of batik.

Raya’s hat features dragon-scale detail and rises to a peak shape as an homage to the stupas found on temple grounds throughout Southeast Asia. Lao visual anthropologist Dr. Arounsack, who consulted on the hat’s design, explains, “There were two critical aspects behind the inspiration for the hat. One is that we took an elemental approach, so if you look at the base of the stupa, the base of the stupa signifies the earth, and as it goes into the dome shape, the dome itself signifies water, so much of the hat is anchored in the importance of the interplay and the relationship between the earth and the water. We thought that fit well within the themes of the movie. Another part of it is that, when we looked at the shape of the hat, it represents a journey—a journey that tapers and finds its way into an apex of wisdom and clarity.”

MARTIAL ARTS INSPIRATIONS

Combat sequences throughout the film were inspired by martial art forms specific to the cultures of Southeast Asia and were created through collaboration among the film's co-writer Qui Nguyen, the Character Animation team, and fight reference choreographer Maggie Macdonald, a longtime collaborator of Nguyen's.

Says Qui Nguyen, "Being a lifelong martial artist, I wanted to make sure that our martial arts were correct. So often when you see a big action movie that is depicted with people who look like me, the martial arts can be just any combination of anything. Really, they could be made-up martial arts. But for this, it was very important that the moves that Namaari, Benja and Raya used were styles that were rooted in Southeast Asian martial arts."

The complex fighting styles employed by Raya and Benja, from the land of Heart, are inspired by Malaysian and Filipino martial arts. When armed, they utilize Arnis, a Filipino fighting style that emphasizes intricate weapon forms (including escrima, which Young Raya wields at the top of the film). Unarmed, they fight using Pencak Silat, a Malaysian and Indonesian fighting style that incorporates animal stances and intricate defenses and strikes.

If Heart's fighting styles are elaborate and dynamic, the fighting techniques of Fang (the land where Namaari comes from) work perfectly in opposition. Her style centers on power and strength. When unarmed, her punches, elbow strikes and kicks are inspired by Muay Thai (also Kun Khmer and Muay Lao), the powerfully effective kickboxing techniques of Southeast Asia. She hits, strikes and kicks hard. But that's not the only thing in her arsenal—she also displays a Vietnamese form that uses surprising flying-scissor-leg takedowns as her means of grappling. When armed, Namaari fights using Krabi Krabong, a Thai sword-fighting style that (like Muay Thai) emphasizes powerful slashes and cuts for both defense and offense.

"If kids are big fans of this movie, they will be able to go study real martial arts that represent the cultures that inspired this film and celebrate Southeast Asia so much," concludes Nguyen.

MARTIAL ARTS INSPIRATIONS:

RAYA AND BENJA

- Hand-to-hand: Pencak Silat (Malaysia & Indonesia)
- Weapons style: Kali and Arnis (Escrima sticks-Philippines)
- Raya's sword was inspired by the kris/keris/kalis, a blade found in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines.

NAMAARI

- Hand-to-hand: Muay Thai (also Kun Khmer and Muay Lao) (Thailand Cambodia and Laos, respectively)
- Takedown style: Inspired by a form of Vietnamese flying-scissor-leg takedowns
- Weapons style: Krabi Krabong Thailand

THE MUSIC OF "RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON"

Acclaimed, award-winning composer James Newton Howard scored "Raya and the Last Dragon." For director Don Hall, it was a dream come true to get to work with Howard on the film. "I've always been a big fan of James Newton Howard's work," says Hall. "He brings such an epic feel to this film, which we knew it had to have. James is so good with emotion as well, and his scores always have a real beating heart to them, which was very important for us. We really wanted to have the film reflect musically, as it does visually, the varied cultures of Southeast Asia. We also wanted to give it a bit of a modern feel at times as well, in terms of embracing the idea of using traditional instrumentation with electronic sounds."

James Newton Howard comments, "I worked to create a soundworld that is as vast and varied as the fictional world of Kumandra, where our story is set. The directors' vision for the land was largely inspired by Southeast Asia, so I wanted to look there first for inspiration and sounds to incorporate into my hybrid orchestral/synth palette."

Howard started with the gamelan ensemble, which is the heart of Indonesian music. Some of the mallet instruments that were utilized from the ensemble were the gangsa, calung, saron and slenthem. The composer also used suling flutes, which are often used in gamelan music, as well as some of the untuned percussion instruments, such as ceng cymbals and kendang drum.

Although Howard used many of the gamelan instruments as they were, he also created new sounds based off of their timbres. The sound of the genggong, a Balinese jaw harp, is also found throughout the score. Its unique sound is a bridge between the synth and organic worlds of the score. Some of the most sacred and common instruments in Indonesian music are the myriad types of gongs layered throughout the film as color in the most spiritual moments of the film.

In addition to all of the Indonesian elements, the composer drew from other regional sounds of Southeast Asia, where he sampled the đàn nhị from Vietnam for several of the bowed and plucked string parts, as well as the sáo bầu, also from Vietnam, for an additional wind color.

"As a good composer does, James tells a story in music that lifts us as we need lifting and builds the emotion," says Osnat Shurer. "He did a really beautiful job." Director Carlos López Estrada adds, "We could not be happier with the score. It is absolutely breathtaking."

The end-credits song, "Lead the Way," was written and performed by super-talented American singer-songwriter and six-time GRAMMY® nominee Jhené Aiko. Her R&B album "Chilombo," which was released last year, was nominated for GRAMMY's Album of the Year and is certified Platinum with seven gold and platinum singles. The album topped the Billboard R&B Albums Chart at No. 1 twice and has garnered over two billion streams worldwide. "Chilombo" also made chart history as the biggest Billboard R&B album debut from a female artist since Beyoncé's "Lemonade."

Jhené Aiko says she was “really excited” to take on the project of writing the film’s end-credits song, and not just because she “loves Disney.” She explains, “I love dragons, and I just love the story and the theme.”

Aiko drew inspiration for the song from the theme of trust in the film, and says, “What I love about the song is that it’s upbeat, it’s fun, but it also has a message for the world, for everyone. A message that is very timely right now. The main themes are trust and taking the first step in trusting others and how we can get so much more accomplished when we really come together. It was an easy song to write because these are things that I truly believe in.”

Aiko found that working on “Lead the Way” with the filmmakers was a “true collaboration.” “They actually let me *lead the way*,” she laughs. “They gave me some direction as far as the songs of mine that they really liked, and they felt the new song could be in the vein of. They let me know the story and characters, and what the themes of the movie were, and I would send back melodies to them.”

Through the process of writing the song, Aiko felt connected to Raya. “I know that feeling of giving someone your trust and it not really turning out the way that you expected, and feeling like maybe you can’t trust anyone anymore,” she says. “But then, also, coming to the realization that just because one thing happens with a person doesn’t mean you have to not trust anyone ever again. You have to just take that leap of faith in trusting people again.”

“Lead the Way” was produced by Julian-Quán Việt Lê, who is a frequent collaborator with Aiko.

“When Jhené contacted me about making a song with her for Disney’s ‘Raya and the Last Dragon,’ I was so excited I ran to my music locker and washed the dust off all of my family’s old traditional Vietnamese instruments,” recalls Julian-Quán Việt Lê.

When Lê was 8 years old, he lived with his family in Vietnam for over a year while his father was finishing his research/dissertation on traditional Vietnamese music. Young Julian started learning đàn bầu (monochord) and sáo trúc (bamboo flute). “This Disney project was a dream come true,” says the music producer. “Being able to do it with my friends made it even more fun and exciting! Because sáo trúc was one of my main instruments growing up, and because most of the countries in Southeast Asia have their own version of a flute, it felt very natural to incorporate the instrument as a unifying element.”

He also felt the same way about plucked zithers such as the đàn tranh, celempung and other Southeast Asian instruments. “The melodic bell pattern was initially inspired by playing around with gamelan sounds. The rest was finding a mixture of interesting percussions and blending other styles to complement the movie and Jhené,” Lê concludes.

HOW TO MAKE A MOVIE REMOTELY: TRUST & UNITY

Nearly all shot production for “Raya and the Last Dragon” took place from the homes of more than 450 artists and crew members. In total, more than 900 Walt Disney Animation Studios employees worked remotely contributing to the film and other upcoming WDAS projects.

“Sometime around March of 2020, as we were heading into the height of our production, which takes place in the last nine months, the pandemic hit,” recalls Shurer. “And we all went into a work-from-home mode, which meant that in hundreds of homes around the area we were making assets, animating, making shots, lighting, having story meetings. All of that was happening with all of us from our individual homes. If you asked us a year ago if this is something we could do, we would have said no, of course not. We have to all be together in the same room, we have to be in the building, we need our setups.”

But necessity is the mother of invention, and when March hit, the technology group was ahead of the game, as about 30% of the artists had had both work and home setups. So, when production had to scale up to remote working, they were able to do it quickly and have everyone up and running from home in about two weeks. The technology team on the movie, including Kyle Odermatt, visual effects supervisor, and Kelsey Hurley, technical supervisor, worked with the studio’s technology team to accomplish the feat.

There were definitely challenges and hurdles to jump over along the way: new software had to be experimented with and developed to meet the needs of the artists; internet issues had to be addressed for everyone working from home; equipment needed to be sourced and delivered; a workable daily schedule had to be designed for people new to working from home; and many more.

With trust and unity being the theme of “Raya and the Last Dragon,” filmmakers found themselves playing out the theme in real life. “One of the interesting things that came from this time of working from home, is that more responsibility was delegated to individual artists by necessity,” says Shurer. “And the artists loved it. And our animators and our lighters and our effects artists just upped their game. As did the supervisors, and the leads, and everyone just learned to trust one another. We learned that we had to trust one another while we working in this distanced way in order to make this movie.”

Visual effects supervisor Kyle Odermatt echoes Shurer, commenting, “One of the incredible aspects of the show that we talked about even before transitioning to work from home is that we wanted to have the directors delegate a great deal of the artistic creation process to heads of departments, department supervisors and the artists themselves.”

And that happened organically when the artists began working from home, and it resulted in less review time and back and forth. “What we found is, it worked like we envisioned,” says Odermatt, “and I would say our directors thought this was an incredible experience, because what they were

seeing was artists really getting to extend their creativity and coming up with results that were really just as good as we've ever done. And the artists were so inspired by what they were able to contribute to the film.

"This could've been the worst project to work on with what we've had to do in this last period of time since March to finish this film off, but I think it's been one of the best experiences for many people, because of that interaction with the directors and that ability to bring all their creativity to the process," concludes Odermatt.

Working from home, rather than a recording studio, was a necessity for all the voice actors as well. Director Don Hall recalls, "We recorded in the voice actors' closets or in tents set up in their homes, but we always had cameras rolling. It was very important for us to capture not only their vocal performance but their physical performance as well, because the animators are inspired by that footage extensively."

Kelly Marie Tran comments, "It was kind of wild to make this whole movie from home. But what was really cool about it was that we were able to have four hundred people working on this movie in their homes and, strangely, it coincides with the message of the film, which is when people work together magic can happen. I don't think anyone knew that a movie like this could be made from home from four hundred different places until we had to do it, but I had the best time working with everyone and being able to record in my pajamas. It was cool."

Awkwafina recalls, "I remember at the height of the lockdown, Disney actually had to send a recording tent to my house, and I thought it was going to be like one of the little tents that you have as a kid, that you put up with like plastic sticks. But no, this was like a full-on tent. It was bigger than apartments that I have lived in. We put in a warm light and a little rug, and I practically lived in there for a couple of months!"

Gemma Chan adds, "It's been an unusual situation, obviously not the kind of usual setup. I was recording at home and working remotely with everybody. It's been a bit different, but I think everyone has risen to the challenge, and it's been great. It's been lovely to be able to make a film in this way. I certainly feel very lucky."

Producer Osnat Shurer concludes, "We're in each other's homes, and we're all focused on one thing: making a movie that's bigger than what each of us is individually. Just as we had the theme of trust at the center of our film, it took trust, a sense of community, of people coming together and setting aside their own personal agenda in order to make this film. I am incredibly proud of the family we've become."

REFLECTING ON "RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON"

Whether they choose theaters or their living rooms, when audiences sit down to watch “Raya and the Last Dragon,” filmmakers hope they will be swept into the fantastical lands of Kumandra and saddle up with Raya on her courageous journey of hope and self-discovery.

Co-director Paul Briggs hopes audiences relate to the theme. “I want my son, and my grandson, and my great-great-grandchildren to understand that this film is about the need for trust in each other so that we can come together to make this world a better place,” he says.

Screenwriter Qui Nguyen comments, “Working for Disney Animation, part of what we do is that we deal in magic. Right now the world is very broken. This movie has a lot of magic in it, but I think the biggest piece of magic in it is trust. It is the real secret ingredient that will save our fictional world of Kumandra. And it’s a message that is really important for the world to have and see.”

Producer Osnat Shurer agrees, remarking, “Divisiveness in the world and the need to come together for the greater good, despite our differences, is something that is top of mind for so many of us. We all are excited to bring out a film that provides a space for that conversation.”

For screenwriter Adele Lim, Sisu may be the key to finding meaning in the film. “The magical thing about Sisu in this movie is that she has that trust and that faith in humanity, even when we don’t deserve it,” says Lim. “Even when we betray it. Even when we let each other down again and again. We can feel embittered. We can feel caught up in our own grudges. But some creature like Sisu being able to see that sort of divine core within everybody is the thing that inspires everyone. I hope that’s what people come away with when they see Sisu.”

Nguyen also reflects on representation in the film, “For me, this is the big dream. I know that a lot of people are super excited about Raya being Disney’s first Southeast Asian princess. But, for me, it is such a big deal for her to be my kids’ new favorite superhero. It is something that I didn’t get to see growing up, someone that really represented me, our voice, our culture. And to be able to have that for my children is a blessing that will last way beyond my time here on Earth. So, it’s an amazing moment to be part of this.”

Adele Lim notes, “Growing up in Southeast Asia, we’re very proud of our culture and our history. But you don’t really ever see it on a Hollywood big screen. I had lots of action heroes on screen growing up, but it was often Hong Kong action kung fu. And now, the idea to be part of a Disney movie that really can celebrate everything that’s beautiful about our culture and how strong our women are is great. And that Raya’s not just a good fighter; she’s got so much personality. I feel that it’s so much of the spirit of a lot of the women that I grew up with. And so, I’m very excited for the world to see this.”

For Awkwafina, the representation was equally as important. “There are so many different levels of representation in ‘Raya and the Last Dragon.’ There’s Southeast Asian representation that you don’t really see a lot of, especially in the animated sphere. But then there’s also the idea of three

strong female leads. In the way that it's presented, I have never seen anything like it in this country. When it does hit screens, it's going to definitely inspire."

Summing up the filmmakers' expectations for the audiences, Carlos López Estrada says, "Audiences should expect to be surprised. It's a fantasy adventure, but it's so much more than that. It has so much comedy to offer. It has so much action and so many thrills. We really wanted the movie to be unexpected, and we really wanted the movie to feel new within the genre and even within the incredible legacy of Disney Animation."

ABOUT THE VOICE CAST

KELLY MARIE TRAN (voice of Raya) has quickly become known as a captivating on-screen presence. The highly sought after actress made The Hollywood Reporter's Next Gen Class of 2017 list and was named one of ABC News' Actors to Watch in 2018.

Most recently, Tran voiced Dawn in DreamWorks' "The Croods: A New Age," the sequel to the Oscar®-nominated animated feature about a caveman family. After its release, the film earned praise from fans and critics alike for its heart and humor. Tran also stars in Hulu's anthology drama series "Monsterland," based on the collection of stories from Nathan Ballingrud. The series premiered on Hulu in October 2020.

In 2019 Tran reprised her role as Rose Tico in "*Star Wars*: The Rise of Skywalker." The film was a smash hit and grossed over $1 billion at the worldwide box office.
In 2018 Tran starred opposite Elizabeth Olsen in Facebook Watch's critically acclaimed original series "Sorry for Your Loss." Created and written by Kit Steinkellner ("Z: The Beginning of Everything"), the show explored the life of a young widow as she dealt with the grief of losing her husband while reconnecting with relationships from her past. Rounding out the cast were Jovan Adepo, Mamoudou Athie and Janet McTeer. The show returned for its second and final season in 2019.

In 2017 Tran made her big-screen debut in "*Star Wars:* The Last Jedi" as Resistance mechanic worker Rose Tico. Her performance and character were widely praised, and made headlines across the globe as Tran became the first Asian American woman cast in a lead role for the franchise. The film earned over $1.3 billion worldwide, becoming the highest-grossing film of 2017.

Tran's past credits include the Netflix original "XOXO," TruTV's "Adam Ruins Everything," NBC's "About a Boy" and Lifetime's "Fall Into Me," among others.

She currently resides in Los Angeles.

AWKWAFINA (voice of Sisu) is a Golden Globe®–winning actress, writer and producer from Queens, New York. She grew up with her given name, Nora Lum, and has since used her trademark comedic style and signature flair to become a breakout talent in the entertainment industry.

Lum can be seen in season one of her Comedy Central show, "Awkwafina Is Nora From Queens," which she created and stars in. The show was picked up for a second season. Additionally, she was recently seen in "Jumanji: The Next Level," which opened December 2019, and most recently in MGM's "Breaking News in Yuba County." She also stars in Marvel Studios' "Shang-Chi and The Legend of The Ten Rings," slated for release on July 9, 2021.

Lum received glowing reviews for her starring role in the indie darling "The Farewell," for which she won a Golden Globe® Award for best actress motion picture, musical or comedy. The story is based on a true story about a family saying goodbye to their beloved matriarch—the only person who doesn't know she is dying. The small family drama quickly won over viewers and critics alike, with many calling it one of the best films of 2019. The film released nationwide on August 2, 2019.

Lum brings an impressive range of talent to everything she does, most famously to Warner Bros.' smash hit "Crazy Rich Asians," opposite Constance Wu, Michelle Yeoh, Henry Golding and Ken Jeong, in which she starred as Peik Lin. The film opened on August 15, 2018, to rave reviews and four straight weekends of $20+ million at the box office. Lum hosted "Saturday Night Live" that same year as part of the show's 44th season. She starred in another Warner Bros. feature, "Ocean's 8," directed by Gary Ross and alongside an impeccable ensemble cast including Sandra Bullock, Cate Blanchett, Anne Hathaway, Mindy Kaling, Sarah Paulson, Rihanna and Helena Bonham Carter. Prior to that, she starred in the indie comedy "Dude," written and directed by Olivia Milch.

In 2016 Lum made her feature-film debut in the comedy "Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising," with Seth Rogen, Zac Efron and Rose Byrne, and was heard as the voice of Quail in the animated adventure "Storks." Her first book, "Awkwafina's NYC," a travel guide to New York, was published by Penguin Random House in 2015.

Lum became an internet sensation in 2012 with her satirical work in the viral video "My Vag," and her 2014 debut album, which featured her acclaimed raps "NYC Bitche$," "Mayor Bloomberg (Giant Margarita)" and the title track, "Yellow Ranger."

She currently resides in Los Angeles.

IZAAC WANG (voice of Boun) was born in Minnesota before moving to Los Angeles, where he began acting in 2016 at the age of 8. Within three months of signing with an agent, he booked his first job. His credits include guest starring on the TV Land series "Teachers," followed by booking a lead role in the feature film "Think Like a Dog," opposite Josh Duhamel and Megan Fox. Izaac was next seen in the Universal Pictures R-rated comedy "Good Boys," about a group of sixth-graders and one epic night. Izaac also stars in the Disney movie "Clifford the Big Red Dog," which will premiere in November 2021. Izaac has two new projects that will be released shortly, as a series regular where he is the voice of one of the main characters.

When not acting or playing video games, Izaac loves to read—he can read a novel in one sitting. He is proficient in ballroom dancing and has participated in several competitions, placing first in his first solo dance show. He has also participated in competitive swimming competitions and has been taking piano lessons for three years. His new favorite pastime is mountain biking.

Summer 2018 marked **GEMMA CHAN's (voice of Namaari)** graduation from leading British TV actress to Hollywood film star. Chan starred as Astrid in the Warner Bros. film adaptation of Kevin Kwan's best-selling novel "Crazy Rich Asians." The film featured a cast of the world's leading Asian artists, including Michelle Yeoh, Constance Wu, Henry Golding, Awkwafina and Ken Jeong. "Crazy Rich Asians" won best comedy at the Critics' Choice Awards and was also nominated for a Golden Globe® (best motion picture–musical or comedy) and a SAG Award® (outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture).

Chan was next seen playing Bess of Hardwick in Josie Rourke's film debut, "Mary Queen of Scots." The film received its world premiere on the closing night of the AFI Film Festival 2018. In 2019 Chan starred in "Captain Marvel," Marvel Studios' first female-fronted superhero film. Chan played Kree sniper Minn-Erva, alongside Brie Larson, Jude Law, Samuel L. Jackson and Ben Mendelsohn.

Following that, Chan returned to British television in the "I Am" anthology drama series for Channel 4, from BAFTA-winning writer-director Dominic Savage. Each episode is named after its lead character, and Chan starred in "I Am Hannah," which told a deeply moving story that explored the societal pressure women face to have children.

Chan was recently seen in “Let Them All Talk,” an original comedy directed by Steven Soderbergh and starring Meryl Streep, Candice Bergen, Dianne Wiest and Lucas Hedges. The film launched on HBO Max, the WarnerMedia streaming service, last December.

Next, Chan will return to the Marvel Cinematic Universe in “Eternals.” She stars in an ensemble cast including Kit Harington, Richard Madden, Angelina Jolie and Salma Hayek. Chan plays the humankind-loving Sersi in the Chloé Zhao–helmed film, which will be released worldwide on November 5, 2021.

Chan is currently filming Olivia Wilde’s psychological thriller “Don’t Worry Darling,” alongside Florence Pugh, Harry Styles, Chris Pine and KiKi Layne.

Chan is well known for her role in the BAFTA-nominated Channel 4/AMC artificial intelligence drama “Humans.” The first series was Channel 4’s biggest original drama hit for 20 years, and the second series was Channel 4’s highest-rating returning drama launch since 2012.

Chan’s work on “Humans” led to her making the one-off documentary “How to Build a Human,” which followed the creation of Gemmabot, built by a leading team of AI experts, designers and special effects companies. Chan went through a grueling range of procedures, including an entire head cast to build the machine to her exact dimensions as well as 3D scanning to determine her facial speech patterns and hours of voice-record recognition.

Chan has starred in some of Britain’s best loved television, including “Doctor Who,” “The IT Crowd,” “Sherlock,” “Secret Diary of a Call Girl” and “Fresh Meat.” In 2014 Chan made her Hollywood debut in the Kenneth Branagh–directed thriller “Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit,” alongside Chris Pine, Keira Knightley and Kevin Costner. Chan’s additional film projects include the box-office hit “Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them,” based on the original book by J.K. Rowling, and “Transformers: The Last Knight,” the fifth film in the “Transformers” franchise, one of the highest-grossing series of all time.

Chan is also an accomplished theater actress; she performed in the sell-out run of the critically acclaimed “Yellow Face,” by Tony Award®–winning David Henry Hwang, at the Park Theatre and again in the National Theatre’s revival. In 2015 she starred in Harold Pinter’s “The Homecoming” at Trafalgar Studios.

Chan has just been announced as L'Oréal Paris’ latest international spokesperson and is a UNICEF UK ambassador.

DANIEL DAE KIM (voice of Benja) just wrapped six episodes of David Schulner’s medical drama “New Amsterdam” on NBC. Kim also made appearances on “Flack,” and is most known for starring as Chin Ho Kelly in the juggernaut series “Hawaii Five-0” and as the executive producer for the critically acclaimed ABC series “The Good Doctor.”

In features, Kim recently wrapped on Joe Penna’s “Stowaway,” as the male lead opposite Anna Kendrick, Toni Collette and Shamier Anderson. In the can, Kim has “Blast Beat,” which premiered

at Sundance 2020 in dramatic competition, and which he also executive produced alongside Macro. He recently can be seen in “Hellboy” opposite David Harbour, Sasha Lane and Milla Jovovich for Lionsgate. He can also be seen in the YA “Divergent” franchise films “Insurgent” and “Allegiant” opposite Shailene Woodley.

In theater, Kim starred in Lincoln Center Theater’s production of “The King and I,” opposite the late Marin Mazzie, and was singled out for his performance by Ben Brantley of The New York Times.

Salford-born **BENEDICT WONG (voice of Tong)** came to prominence in Stephen Frears’ 2002 feature film “Dirty Pretty Things,” in which his acclaimed performance as Guo Yi earned him a nomination for best supporting actor at the 2003 British Independent Film Awards. Wong went on to give notable big-screen performances in Danny Boyle’s “Sunshine”; the Frank Cottrell-Boyce–penned “Grow Your Own”; and “The Martian” and “Prometheus,” both under the reins of legendary director Ridley Scott.

In 2014 Wong starred as Kublai Khan in Netflix’s historical epic series “Marco Polo.” After two years and 20 episodes, he would journey from the Mongol Empire to the Marvel Universe when Wong played Wong in “Doctor Strange,” “Avengers: Infinity War” and “Avengers: Endgame.” In 2019 he would reunite with the Russo brothers, who directed the two “Avengers” movies, for “Deadly Class,” in which he played Master Lin. In the same year he would also appear alongside Will Smith in Ang Lee’s innovative “Gemini Man.” Wong is the first British East Asian to be inducted into the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science.

Most recently Wong has been seen as Mr. Wickfield in Armando Iannucci’s “The Personal History of David Copperfield” and Edson Oda’s directorial debut, “Nine Days,” which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2020. Currently Wong is working on Marvel Studios’ “Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness.”

Born and raised in Ottawa, Canada, **SANDRA OH (voice of Virana)** started working professionally at age 16 in television, theater and commercials. After three years at the prestigious National Theatre School of Canada, she beat out more than 1,000 other hopefuls and landed the coveted title role in the CBC telefilm “The Diary of Evelyn Lau.” Her performance brought her a Gemini (Canada’s Emmy) nomination for best actress and the 1994 Cannes FIPA d’Or for best actress.

Oh wrapped production on the feature film “Umma” and will next star in the Netflix limited series “The Chair.” She currently stars in and serves as an executive producer for BBC America’s critically acclaimed “Killing Eve,” for which she won a historic Golden Globe® Award for best actress in a drama series, a SAG Award® for female actor in a drama series and a Critics Choice Award for lead actress in a drama series. She has also received three Emmy® Award nominations for lead actress in a drama series for this series. In 2019 she hosted the Golden Globe Awards alongside

Andy Samberg, as well as an episode of “Saturday Night Live,” for which she was nominated for an Emmy Award in the category of outstanding guest actress in a comedy series.

Oh won a Golden Globe® Award and a Screen Actors Guild Award® for her role as Dr. Cristina Yang on the hit ABC series “Grey’s Anatomy,” as well as receiving two Emmy® Award nominations. Previously, Oh starred in the enormously successful Fox Searchlight feature film “Sideways,” for which she won a Screen Actors Guild Award for outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture.

On stage, Oh starred in “Death and the Maiden” at the Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago and completed a sold-out run of the world premiere of “Satellites” at New York’s Public Theater for playwright Diana Son. She won her first Genie Award (Canada’s Oscar®) for her leading role in “Double Happiness,” a performance that brought her much acclaim and secured her place as one of Canada’s rising young film stars. Never straying far from her theater roots, Oh has also starred in the world premieres of Jessica Hagedorn’s “Dogeaters” at the La Jolla Playhouse and Diana Son’s “Stop Kiss” at the Joseph Papp Public Theater in New York, a role for which she received a Theatre World award. She also performed “The Vagina Monologues” in New York. Oh was back at The Public in New York, in Hansol Jung’s “Wild Goose Dreams,” which participated in the 2016 Sundance MENA workshop in Morocco.

Oh’s additional feature film credits include “Under the Tuscan Sun,” “Tammy,” “Defendor,” “Blindness,” “The Night Listener,” “For Your Consideration,” “3 Needles,” “Long Life, Happiness and Prosperity,” “Sorry, Haters,” “Ramona and Beezus,” “Rick,” “Bean,” “Guinevere,” “The Red Violin,” “Waking the Dead,” “The Princess Diaries” and “Pay or Play.” She also starred in Michael Radford’s improvised “Dancing at the Blue Iguana,” a bleak and raw view of life in a strip club in Los Angeles. Her performance in “Last Night,” a Canadian film about the end of the world, led to her winning a second Genie Award for best actress in 1999. She also starred in “Catfight,” opposite Anne Heche, and the animated features “Over the Moon” and “Window Horses.”

She moved to Los Angeles in 1996 to begin the first of six seasons as Rita Wu, the smart and sassy assistant on the HBO comedy series “Arliss,” for which she won the final CableACE Award for best actress in a comedy. Her additional television credits include the British production of “Thorne: Scaredy Cat,” HBO’s “Six Feet Under” and Showtime’s “Further Tales of the City.”

Following her breakout role in the Universal Pictures comedy “Little,” **THALIA TRAN (voice of Little Noi)** starred in the NBC drama “Council of Dads.” Playing the pivotal role of the young daughter Charlotte, Thalia co-starred alongside Sarah Wayne Callies and Clive Standen. Based on Bruce Feiler’s book of the same name, the series followed a father and his family whose lives are thrown into disarray after a potentially terminal diagnosis.

Box-office hit “Little” centers around Jordan Sanders (Regina Hall), a take-no-prisoners mogul who torments her long-suffering assistant (Issa Rae) and employees on a daily basis. She soon

faces an unexpected threat to her personal life and career when she magically transforms into a 13-year-old version of herself. Tran shines as the lovable Raina, a member of the nerd squad in the school young Jordan is forced to attend. Prior to her appearance in "Little," Tran had a recurring role as Linda in the television short series "Tiny Feminists."

Born in Newport Beach, Calif., Tran has always been surrounded by and drawn to performing arts. At a young age she was constantly singing and performing for her family. When she is not perfecting her skills in kung fu, Tran spends her free time composing music, playing the piano and practicing guitar. She has hope to one day record professionally and perform a charity concert benefiting special-needs organizations. She is also the co-president of her local Project Linus chapter, which collects blankets locally and distributes them to children in hospitals, shelters, social service agencies or anywhere that a child might be in need of a big hug.

LUCILLE SOONG (voice of Dang Hu) was born in Beijing, China, and moved to Hong Kong when she was 22. Discovered by the famous English director Lewis Gilbert, Soong was cast to play a bride in the feature "Ferry to Hong Kong," with Orson Welles.

After moving to London during the Swinging '60s, she was chased down by an agent, who offered her a role in the historical feature "55 Days at Peking," with Charlton Heston and Ava Gardner. During this time, she became the first Chinese fashion model to join the English Models Directory. She guest-starred in the long-running British TV series "Coronation Street" and landed the leading lady in the American movie "One More Time," with Sammy Davis Jr., directed by Jerry Lewis.

After making the move to Hollywood, Soong had notable feature roles in "The Joy Luck Club" and "Freaky Friday." Her television roles included recurring roles on "Desperate Housewives," "According to Jim," "Dharma & Greg," "Huff" and "Bones" before landing the role of Grandma Huang in "Fresh Off the Boat."

Emmy®-nominated **ALAN TUDYK (voice of Tuk Tuk)** is a multi-dimensional actor whose credits span throughout stage, film, television and voiceover entertainment platforms.

Tudyk had two highly anticipated projects premiere in early 2021, "Resident Alien" and the animated dark comedy "Devil May Care," both on Syfy. He stars as the lead in "Resident Alien," which is the live-action adaptation of the Dark Horse Comics series created by Peter Hogan and Steve Parkhouse. He voices the role of the Devil in "Devil May Care." With the voices of Pamela Adlon, Stephanie Beatriz, Phil LaMarr and Asif Ali joining him, the series follows the Devil hiring a social media coordinator to help him rebrand Hell as the ultimate place to live.

Tudyk also voices the maniacal Joker in DC Universe's "Harley Quinn" animated series, which was recently renewed for a third season to air on HBO Max. In 2016 Tudyk appeared in Lucasfilm's "Rogue One: A *Star Wars* Story" as the scene-stealing security droid K-2SO. He also voiced

characters in two Academy Award®–nominated animated films, playing the Duke Weaselton in Disney's "Zootopia" and the rooster Hei in Disney's "Moana."

Tudyk is also the creator, executive producer and star of the Emmy®-nominated series "Con Man," which is loosely based on Tudyk and Nathan Fillion's experiences starring in "Firefly." "Con Man" debuted at Lionsgate's Comic Con HQ in 2015 and later aired on Syfy. In 2016 Tudyk, along with Fillion, also launched "Con Man: The Game," based on the series, which allowed players to build and host their own comic-book conventions.

Tudyk has shown audiences wide versatility in numerous television shows and a plethora of feature films. He co-starred in the Jay Roach 2015 SAG Award®–nominated feature "Trumbo," opposite Bryan Cranston, Diane Lane, Helen Mirren and John Goodman, as well as 2014's "Welcome to Me" with Kristen Wiig. In 2013 Tudyk co-starred in the well-received Jackie Robinson biopic "42," opposite Chadwick Boseman, as former Philadelphia Phillies manager Ben Chapman. He made his feature film debut in 1998, when he first appeared opposite Robin Williams in "Patch Adams."

Tudyk's role in the Disney animated feature "Wreck-It Ralph" garnered him an Annie Award for his role as King Candy. He can also be heard in its sequel, "Ralph Breaks the Internet," as KnowsMore. Tudyk has also loaned his voice to the Duke of Weselton in Disney's Academy Award®–winning film "Frozen"; Alistair Krei in "Big Hero 6"; and Ludo and King Butterfly on the Disney Channel series "Star vs. the Forces of Evil."

His additional film credits include: "28 Days," "A Knight's Tale," "Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story," "Death at a Funeral" (the original UK version), "Knocked Up," "Tucker and Dale vs Evil," "3:10 to Yuma," "Serenity," "Premature," "Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter" and "Transformers: Dark of the Moon." Additionally, Tudyk motion-performed the lead robot, Sonny, in "I, Robot," opposite Will Smith.

In television, Tudyk starred in DC Universe's "Doom Patrol" and season three of Netflix's "Santa Clarita Diet." He was a series regular on the critically acclaimed ABC comedy "Suburgatory," as well as on NBC's workplace comedy "Powerless" and BBC America's "Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency." His work on Joss Whedon's "Firefly" has been highly lauded by fans and has gained him a strong cult following. Tudyk also appeared in "Strangers with Candy," "Dollhouse," "Frasier," "Justified" and "Arrested Development." He also was the host of "Newsreaders," written and produced by Rob Corddry and David Wain, on Adult Swim.

Tudyk attended the prestigious Juilliard School in New York and has starred on Broadway opposite Kristin Chenoweth in "Epic Proportions," played Lancelot with the original cast in Monty Python's "Spamalot," and played the lead role of Peter in "Prelude to a Kiss," opposite John Mahoney.

PATTI HARRISON (voice of Tail Chief) recently completed production for the third season of Hulu's "Shrill," on which she plays Aidy Bryant's "sociopath-adjacent" coworker. She next appears in a lead role, opposite Ed Helms, in director Nikole Beckwith's feature "Together Together."

In the summer of 2019, she was honored as one of Variety's 10 Comics to Watch at that year's prestigious Just for Laughs festival in Montreal. She co-hosted the Forever Dog podcast "A Woman's Smile" alongside Lorelai Ramirez, and previously hosted monthly shows "It's a Guy Thing" at Union Hall in New York and "Died & Gone to Heaven!" at Largo at the Coronet in L.A.

Harrison has been profiled by Rolling Stone, The New York Times, GQ, Interview, Time, Vulture, Nylon and Bust magazines, among others. Her impressive list of TV-writing credits includes Netflix's "I Think You Should Leave with Tim Robinson" and "Big Mouth." She can be seen on screen in Paul Feig's feature "A Simple Favor" and on television in "High Maintenance," "Search Party," "The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon" and "Full Frontal with Samantha Bee."

A natural talent with irresistible charm, **ROSS BUTLER (voice of Spine Chief)** continues to make an undeniable mark as he effortlessly evolves his body of work while redefining Asian representation in Hollywood.

Butler will next reprise his role as Trevor in the final installment of the wildly successful Netflix franchise "To All the Boys," opposite Noah Centineo and Lana Condor. In addition, Butler will soon begin production on "Shazam! Fury of the Gods," where he will reprise his role as Super Hero Eugene.

In television he can be seen as Zach Dempsey in the Netflix original series "13 Reasons Why," which premiered its fourth and final season in 2020. Other notable television credits include: the CW hit teen drama "Riverdale," opposite Lili Reinhart, Cole Sprouse and KJ Apa; the Disney Channel family comedy "K.C. Undercover," opposite Zendaya; the popular MTV supernatural drama "Teen Wolf," opposite Tyler Posey; and the ABC Family original drama "Chasing Life," from Susanna Fogel.

Butler is an avid outdoorsman, and passionate about everything, from scuba diving to motorcycles and motor sports. In addition, he is a gifted musician who is classically trained in piano and a well-versed guitar player with vocals skills to match. As if that weren't enough, Butler continues to challenge himself as he learns to speak Arabic, adding to his already impressive résumé of languages, including Spanish and Mandarin.

The Singapore-born, Virginia-raised actor currently resides in Los Angeles.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

DON HALL (Director, Story by) began his career at Walt Disney Animation Studios in June 1995 as a story apprentice on "Tarzan." He served as a story artist on several development projects and productions, including "The Emperor's New Groove" and "Chicken Little," before becoming head of story for "Meet the Robinsons" and "The Princess and the Frog."

Hall made his directorial debut for Disney Animation's 2011 "Winnie the Pooh" and went on to direct "Big Hero 6," which won an Academy Award® for best animated feature film. He then served as co-director on "Moana." He is the creator of the upcoming Disney Animation/Disney Plus animated series, "Baymax," and is currently directing his next as-yet unannounced feature film for Disney Animation.

Hall graduated with a BFA in drawing and painting from the University of Iowa and a BFA in character animation from California Institute of the Arts. After graduating from CalArts, he returned to the campus as an instructor in advanced story development.

Hall is a native of Glenwood, Iowa, and currently resides in Pasadena with his wife and two children.

CARLOS LÓPEZ ESTRADA (Director, Story by) joined Walt Disney Animation Studios in late spring 2019. He is a member of the Studios' story trust, and, in addition to directing "Raya and the Last Dragon," is currently directing his next as-yet unannounced feature film with the Studio.

López Estrada's debut film, "Blindspotting," premiered on opening night at Sundance 2018 and subsequently sold to Lionsgate for a theatrical release. The film was produced by Snoot Entertainment and starred Daveed Diggs. López Estrada was selected for Variety's "10 Directors to Watch" 2018 list and was nominated by the Directors Guild of America (DGA) for outstanding directorial achievement of a first-time feature film director for 2018. His second film, "Summertime," premiered on opening night of Sundance 2020.

On the TV side, López Estrada directed an episode of FX's "Legion" and has an original piece in development at UCP.

López Estrada is also a prolific music video/commercial director and a founding partner of the multi-disciplined production studio Little Ugly. He's won a Latin GRAMMY® for an animated video he directed for artists Jesse & Joy, which established him as the youngest director to win a Latin GRAMMY to date. He's worked with musicians such as Billie Eilish, Father John Misty, Thundercat and Flying Lotus, Carly Rae Jepsen, Capital Cities, Clipping and Passion Pit.

López Estrada lives in Los Angeles, Calif., with his dog Cous and a large family of plants.

PAUL BRIGGS (Co-Director, Story by) joined Walt Disney Animation Studios as an animation intern and was hired as an effects animator for "Mulan" (1998) and "Brother Bear." In 2000 Briggs joined the story team and was first credited as a story artist on "The Princess and the Frog." He then went on to be story supervisor on the Academy Award®–winning big-screen adventure "Frozen."

A native of San Antonio, Texas, Briggs grew up in Florida, California and Arkansas. He was 10

when his mom splurged for the book “The Illusion of Life” by Disney veterans Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston. Briggs was hooked, and later attended the Kansas City Art Institute—inspired by alumnus and longtime Disney animator Marc Davis.

Briggs is married, with two boys and a dog named ChickPea. When not working, Briggs keeps busy: he’s published books and has done large-scale drawings, sketches, greeting cards, furniture design, calligraphy, letterpress printing and design work.

Briggs’ favorite Disney films include “Pinocchio,” “Peter Pan” and “Dumbo.” “‘Baby Mine’ from ‘Dumbo’ is a pretty amazing sequence,” he says. “Those old storytellers were dealing with some pretty heavy stuff under the hood: a child's separation from a parent. It’s a very emotional sequence handled in a very tender way. I love that.”

JOHN RIPA (Co-Director, Story by) joined Walt Disney Animation Studios in 1993 as an animating assistant on the final months of production on Disney Animation’s 32nd animated featured, “The Lion King.” He went on to be an animator on “Meet the Robinsons,” supervising the character of Goob; “Treasure Planet,” as supervising animator for Jim Hawkins; and “Tarzan,” supervising the animation of the lead character as a baby and in his youth.

Ripa then transitioned to be a storyboard artist on “Tangled” and “Frozen” before being story lead on the Academy Award®–winning “Big Hero 6” and “Zootopia.” He recently served as co-head of story on “Moana” before becoming co-director on “Raya and the Last Dragon.”
Ripa was born in Alabama and grew up in New York. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in illustration from State University of New York at Buffalo, and spent two years in the character animation program at the California Institute of the Arts.

OSNAT SHURER, p.g.a. (Producer) previously produced the 2016 Academy Award®–nominated “Moana.” Shurer joined Walt Disney Animation Studios in 2012 as vice president of development, working with filmmakers to move features and shorts through the creative process. As producer of “Moana,” Shurer helped manage the film through story, script, music and casting, and led the film’s partnership with publicity, marketing and consumer products. Shurer also created the film’s Oceanic Story Trust, a team of Pacific Islander consultants from the islands with whom production collaborated closely throughout the making of “Moana.”

Previously Shurer served as the executive producer of the shorts group at Pixar Animation Studios, responsible for Pixar’s short films. While at Pixar, Shurer produced or executive produced a host of hit shorts, including the Oscar®-nominated “Lifted” (2006), “One Man Band” (2005) and “Boundin’” (2003). Her credits at Pixar also include video shorts like “Jack-Jack Attack” and “The Adventures of Mr. Incredible.”

Shurer's duties at Pixar also included creating and supervising an in-house documentary department to produce DVD bonus material content and other archival materials, as well as overseeing the development and production of commercials and theme park attractions. For "The Incredibles," Shurer produced and directed "Vowellet: An Essay by Sara Vowell" and executive produced "The Making of 'The Incredibles.'" She also produced "Exploring the Reef with Jean-Michel Cousteau" for director Andrew Stanton, in conjunction with the release of "Finding Nemo."

At Pixar, Shurer was also responsible for helping to create several cutting-edge multimedia shows, including MoMA's impressive "Pixar: 20 Years of Animation," which opened in 2006 and went on to travel the world. The exhibit featured "Artscape," a widescreen projection space that provided viewers with a unique digital artistic experience, and "Zoetrope," a dynamic 3D installation, modeled on pre-cinema technology, which used dimensional character sculptures to simulate continuous motion.

Shurer was consulting producer on the 2011 Golden Globe®–nominated feature "Arthur Christmas."

Prior to joining Pixar in 2002, Shurer produced and directed film and television in various media—live action, animation, live television and various interactive presentations for museums. She worked on documentaries and narrative films throughout the world, in such places as India, China, Tibet, Japan, Africa and Europe, with directors ranging from Michelangelo Antonioni to Alfonso Cuarón.

Shurer was born in Israel, and, as the child of an airline executive, she grew up in many parts of the world. She received a degree in film from New York University and resides in Los Angeles, Calif.

PETER DEL VECHO, p.g.a. (Producer), also serves as senior vice president of production for Walt Disney Animation Studios, where he oversees the production of all feature films for Disney Animation.

In 2019 Del Vecho produced "Frozen 2," the highest-grossing animated feature of all time. In 2013 Del Vecho produced "Frozen," which was the highest-grossing animated feature ever released at that time. Del Vecho earned an Oscar® and a PGA Award for his efforts. Overall, "Frozen" received multiple honors, including two Academy Awards®, a Golden Globe®, a BAFTA Award, a PGA Award, five Annie Awards and two GRAMMY® Awards.

Del Vecho joined Walt Disney Animation Studios in 1995 and came to the studio with a wealth of production experience in theater. Having worked at numerous theaters in New York and on the East Coast, Del Vecho eventually joined the renowned Guthrie Theater before leaving in 1995 as the associate producing director. It was his passion for a collaborative artistic environment that brought him to Disney.

As the production manager of “Hercules,” Del Vecho was responsible for guiding a production team of 300 artists. He served as the associate producer of the 2002 animated film “Treasure Planet,” which received an Oscar® nomination for best animated feature. As associate producer of the 2005 animation adventure “Chicken Little,” Del Vecho was creatively involved in the production of the studio’s first full-length 3D animated feature.

Del Vecho produced the animated musical comedy “The Princess and the Frog,” which hit theaters in 2009 and received three Oscar® nominations, including best animated feature. He also guided WDAS back to the Hundred Acre Wood as the producer of 2011’s big-screen adventure “Winnie the Pooh.”

QUI NGUYEN (Screenplay by, Story by) is a Vietnamese American screenwriter. He previously worked on “Dispatches from Elsewhere” (AMC), “The Society” (Netflix), “Incorporated” (Syfy) and “Peg+Cat” (PBS), for which he received a 2016 Daytime Emmy® for outstanding writing in a pre-school animated series.

Before coming to Walt Disney Animation Studios, he was a member of Marvel Studios Writers Program. Nguyen is also an award-winning playwright and the founder of the Obie Award–winning Vampire Cowboys Theatre Company of New York City. Two of his most popular plays, “Vietgone” and “She Kills Monsters,” are currently being developed for television. The latter was the seventh most produced play in colleges and high schools in 2019.

ADELE LIM (Screenplay by, Story by) is a writer-producer for film and television whose credits include, in addition to “Raya and the Last Dragon,” “Crazy Rich Asians.” A Malaysian native of Chinese descent, she came to the U.S. at age 19 and graduated from Emerson College in Boston. She has 17 years of experience writing and producing primetime television dramas, including “Private Practice” and “Lethal Weapon,” and was the co-showrunner and executive producer of “Star-Crossed.”

Lim mentors emerging writers through the Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment (CAPE) and the Sundance Institute and has been named to Elle’s Women in Hollywood Power List and Variety’s Women’s Impact Report. Currently she is working on an original feature comedy that has been acquired by Lionsgate.

JENNIFER LEE (Executive Producer) is the chief creative officer of Walt Disney Animation Studios (WDAS) and is the writer/director of “Frozen 2” (2019) and “Frozen” (2013), the top two highest-grossing animated features ever released. Directing the “Frozen” features with Chris Buck, Lee became the highest-grossing female director of a feature, with more than $1.45 billion and $1.27

billion in global box office for “Frozen 2” and “Frozen,” respectively. “Frozen 2” received the Humanitas Prize for Feature Film, Family and the Kids’ Choice Award for Animated film, two Annie Awards and a Visual Effects Society Award. “Frozen” received multiple honors, including two Academy Awards®, a Golden Globe®, a BAFTA® Award, a PGA Award, five Annie Awards and two GRAMMY® Awards.

Lee’s career with Walt Disney Animation Studios began March 2011, when she became the co-writer of 2012’s Oscar®-nominated, arcade-hopping adventure “Wreck-It Ralph.” For their screenplay, she and Phil Johnston received an Annie Award. She then penned the screenplay for “Frozen” and went on to direct the film (with Buck). In 2014, for her work on “Frozen,” Lee was given Women in Film’s Dorothy Arzner Directors Award at the Crystal + Lucy Awards. That same year, she gave a memorable commencement speech at her undergraduate alma mater, University of New Hampshire, and was awarded an honorary doctorate degree.

In 2016, Lee was one of the writers of the story for the Academy Award®–winning feature, “Zootopia.”

Lee was one of the executive producers of 2018’s Oscar®-nominated feature “Ralph Breaks the Internet.” She also wrote the book for “Frozen: the Broadway Musical,” for which she received a Tony® Award nomination in 2018, as well as adapted the screenplay for the live action feature, “A Wrinkle in Time” that same year.

As chief creative officer, Lee oversees the creation of all content, including feature films, shorts and series. She can be seen in her CCO role and as writer/director of “Frozen 2” in the critically acclaimed six-episode series, “Into the Unknown: Making Frozen 2” on Disney+.

Before joining Walt Disney Animation Studios, Lee built a career in book publishing before she pursued screenwriting, entering Columbia University’s graduate film program in 2001. There she received the William Goldman Award for excellence in screenwriting, and her first feature-length script, “Hinged on Stars,” won the Columbia University Film Festival. She graduated in 2005 with an MFA in film.

Lee lives in Los Angeles, Calif., with her family.

JARED BUSH (Executive Producer) was the screenwriter on “Moana” and the co-director/co-writer of the Oscar®-winning “Zootopia.” Next, Bush will direct Walt Disney Animation Studios’ upcoming “Encanto” with fellow director Byron Howard.

Bush is also co-creator, executive producer and writer for Disney XD’s animated comedy adventure series “Penn Zero: Part-Time Hero.”

Bush, who began his career as a script reader for Academy Award®–winning director Robert Zemeckis, worked as a staff writer on the series "Baby Bob," starring Adam Arkin and Elliott Gould. Bush added producing to his repertoire, serving as executive story editor and co-producer of Will Smith's series "All of Us." Bush has developed original television series for Revolution Studios, Fox and NBC, and feature film projects for New Line Cinema, Columbia/Tristar and 20th Century Fox.

A Harvard University graduate with a degree in English and American literature, Bush is an avid traveler who has visited 40 countries on six continents, and he is an accomplished trombone player who has played with several jazz bands over the years. Bush currently resides in Los Angeles with his college sweetheart, three sons and a house full of pets that include an emperor scorpion, a ball python, a tree frog and an 80-pound pit bull.

FAWN VEERASUNTHORN (Head of Story) joined the Studio as a story artist in 2011, and has since contributed her talents to the Oscar®-winning feature films "Frozen" and "Zootopia," as well as Walt Disney Animation Studios' "Moana," "Ralph Breaks the Internet" and "Frozen 2."

Born and raised in Chonburi, Thailand, Veerasunthorn grew up being inspired by Disney animated films and knew she wanted to take part in recreating the magic and wonder they gave her for the next generation. She was further encouraged to pursue a career in animation at age 18, when she heard that an artist from Thailand was working at Disney's animation studio in Florida. Veerasunthorn received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in time-based media studies from Columbus College of Art & Design.

Prior to joining Disney Animation, Veerasunthorn served as a story artist in television and film at studios including Illumination Entertainment, Nickelodeon and Warner Bros. Before getting into storyboarding, Veerasunthorn was an animation director at Six Point Harness Studios.

Veerasunthorn resides in Burbank, Calif., with her husband, daughter and two cats.

JAMES NEWTON HOWARD (Original Score by) is one of the film industry's most versatile and honored composers, with a career spanning over 30 years and encompassing more than 140 film and television projects. He is an eight-time Oscar® nominee, and Emmy® and GRAMMY® winner. Howard has also been honored with ASCAP's prestigious Henry Mancini Award for Lifetime Achievement and the BMI ICON Award.

As a record producer, arranger and songwriter, he has collaborated with some of pop's biggest names, including Elton John; Crosby, Stills & Nash; Barbra Streisand; Earth, Wind and Fire; Bob Seger; Rod Stewart; Toto; Glenn Frey; Diana Ross; Carly Simon; Olivia Newton-John; Randy Newman; Rickie Lee Jones; and Chaka Khan.

In 1985 he was offered his first film, “Head Office,” and he quickly knew he had found his calling. He has since created the scores for a broad range of films, recently including “Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald,” “The Nutcracker and the Four Realms,” “Red Sparrow,” “Roman J. Israel, Esq.,” “Detroit,” “Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them,” all four installments of “The Hunger Games” franchise, “Concussion,” “Nightcrawler” and “Maleficent.” His long list of credits also includes “Snow White and the Huntsman,” “The Bourne Legacy,” “Salt,” “Water for Elephants,” “Batman Begins,” “Collateral,” “Snow Falling on Cedars,” “Outbreak,” “The Village,” “Hidalgo,” “Peter Pan,” “Wyatt Earp,” “Lady in the Water,” “The Sixth Sense,” “Unbreakable,” “Freedomland,” “Dinosaur,” “Treasure Planet,” “Signs,” “Falling Down,” “Primal Fear,” “Glengarry Glen Ross,” “Waterworld,” “The Devil’s Advocate,” “Dave” and “Pretty Woman,” among many others. In 2017 Howard completed his first live concert tour, “3 Decades of Music for Hollywood,” visiting 15 European cities, with the premiere being held at the Royal Albert Hall.

In addition to his contributions to film and television music, Howard has written a number of concert works. He has written two pieces for the Pacific Symphony: “I Would Plant a Tree,” which debuted in 2009; and his “Concerto for Violin and Orchestra,” which premiered in 2015, featuring renowned violinist James Ehnes. He was also commissioned to write one of the encores for Hilary Hahn’s collection “In 27 Pieces: The Hilary Hahn Encores,” entitled “133 … At Least.” His chamber work entitled “they have just arrived at this new level” was commissioned and premiered in 2018 by the Seattle Chamber Music Society, of which James Ehnes is principal violinist and artistic director. Most recently, his “Concerto for Cello and Orchestra” was premiered with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra.

His upcoming film projects include Disney’s “Jungle Cruise” and the third installment of the “Fantastic Beasts” franchise.